A. CALL TO ORDER / DECLARATION OF QUORUM

With Chairman Peters absent, Commission Ford volunteered to act as the chairperson pro tempore. Commissioner Asaro made a motion to elect Commissioner Ford as the chair person for the meeting. Commissioner Goddard seconded the motion.

A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved by voice call 5-0.

Chairman Pro Tempore Ford called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. He explained the general meeting procedure, schedule, agenda items, time limits on public testimony and opportunities for cross examination of witnesses. Chairman Pro Tempore Ford concluded the opening statement by saying that the Plan Commission forwards a recommendation to the City Council which makes the final determination on any matters discussed by the Plan Commission.

Chairman Pro Tempore Ford suggested that the items regarding Modification to the Administrative Rules and Procedures of the Plan Commission and 2015 Plan Commission Schedule, Election of Liaisons, Zoning Committee Members, etc. be taken off of the agenda and be rescheduled for a meeting in January due to small turn out of the Commission members. With none opposed, the items were removed from the agenda.

B. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: November 5, 2014 and November 12, 2014
Commissioner Goddard made a motion to approve the minutes from November 5, 2014 with the following corrections:

Chairman Pro Tempore Ford noted that on page three, in the third paragraph, Mr. MaRous’ name had been misspelled.

Commissioner Dubin seconded the motion.

A voice vote was taken and the minutes were approved by voice call 4-0-1 with Commissioner Asaro abstaining.

Commissioner Goddard made a motion to approve the minutes from November 12, 2014. Commissioner Dubin seconded the motion.

A voice vote was taken and the minutes were approved unanimously.

C. NEW BUSINESS

TEXT AMENDMENT TO THE ZONING ORDINANCE

Parking Requirements for Increase in Residential Density

Specifically consider a text amendment, pursuant to City Code Title 6, Zoning, to Chapter 16 – Off-street Parking and Loading, regarding the increase in parking requirements for the increase in residential use density.

Mr. Damir Latinovic, Neighborhood and Land Use Planner, presented the Staff Report. Staff proposes that conversions of existing buildings to increase residential density be required to provide parking spaces as any new development. Coach houses should also be required to provide one parking place per dwelling unit. Downtown Districts (D, RP) are to remain exempt to encourage density where transit is available. Mr. Latinovic explained the four standards and stated that all standards are satisfied.

Commissioner Goddard asked how a facility would provide 1.5 spaces. Mr. Latinovic explained that 1.5 would be rounded up to 2. For buildings such as a duplex, two units would require 3 parking spaces.

Commissioner Pigozzi asked for clarification that existing two or three-flats without garages or off-street parking are exempt and would be considered legal non-conforming if no dwelling units were being added, to which Mr. Latinovic said, yes.

Commissioner Freeman asked if the structure would still be exempt if the property changed ownership, to which Mr. Latinovic answered, yes. Commissioner Freeman then asked what need the proposal serves. Mr. Latinovic explained that this issue was first brought up at a Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) meeting. Converting a single-family residence into a three-flat currently creates a parking deficit. As a result, parking for new dwelling units would spill onto the street.

Discussion followed regarding residential projects and properties where new parking spaces would be required.
Chairman Pro Tempore Ford asked if anyone from the audience would like to ask any questions before getting into general comments about the proposal.

Ms. Jessica Feldman, 450 Davis Street, inquired where it would be possible for a single-family residence to be converted into a two or three-flat. Mr. Latinovic explained that most districts allow for various types of housing. The only districts where converting a single-family dwelling into a multi-unit dwelling would be prohibited would be in a R1 or R2 district.

Mr. Matt Rodgers, 133 Clyde Avenue, ZBA Chairman, explained that this text amendment started with a case that was heard in front of the ZBA where a single family residence was to be converted into a three-flat. The case only came before the ZBA because of a 20-sq. ft. increase in the building footprint, which in turn triggered a parking requirement. The applicant later eliminated the square footage increase in order to avoid the parking requirement and was able to convert a three-bedroom single family home into an eight-bedroom three-unit building without the need for additional parking. Mr. Rodgers brought this issue to City Council where Alderman Fiske made an aldermanic reference for staff to explore a text amendment.

Commissioner Asaro remarked that the rationale makes sense to increase the number of parking spaces when a number of units increases. He stated that he did not realize how frequently these cases happen and the amendment seems to make sense.

Discussion followed on other possible issues that arise when an increase in density is proposed.

Chairman Pro Tempore Ford stated his agreement with Commissioner Asaro and surmised that the amendment would be a reasonable solution to the parking problem.

Mr. Pigozzi noted that this amendment seems logical and even though it cannot control the number of cars retained at a single-family residence, it can help ease the burden on street parking for conversions.

Chairman Pro Tempore Ford closed Public Comment portion of the hearing.

Commissioner Freeman agreed that there is a gap in the code for single-family conversion parking requirements; however he does not see how it should apply to coach houses.

Chairman Pro Tempore Ford asked if any part of the City Code specifically referenced a change in use status when for example the children of property owners move out of the coach house and renters move in. Mr. Latinovic answered that if the property becomes a rental, it must be registered with the City.

Mr. Asaro pointed out that the proposed ordinance says that an existing coach house is exempt.

Upon a question by Commissioner Freeman, Mr. Latinovic stated that adding a bathroom and a kitchen would make the coach house an additional dwelling, and therefore, for a new dwelling unit parking would be required.
Chairman Pro Tempore Ford noted that this amendment will at least solve a part of the parking problem. The Commission might need to accept that they are imposing a burden on new coach house owners and not on others; however, this happens all the time.

Upon a question by Mr. Pigozzi, Mr. Latinovic stated only new coach houses and other increases in density will be held to this new requirement. If for some reason, the requirement places a hardship on the property, the owners are still able to apply for a variance. Chairman Pro Tempore Ford asked how the requirement would be triggered, to which Mr. Latinovic answered that a building permit for bedrooms, bathrooms, or kitchen facilities would trigger the requirement.

Chairman Pro Tempore Ford noted that no serious reservations had been raised with respect to multi-family units, only coach houses. He asked if the Commission would like to address them separately or in a single motion.

The Commission agreed to address both multi-family and coach houses in a single motion.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Pro Tempore Ford invited a motion.

Commissioner Pigozzi made a motion to approve the proposed text amendment as proposed by staff.

Commissioner Asaro seconded the motion.

A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved by voice call 5-0.

Mr. Latinovic reminded everyone about the special Plan Commission Meeting scheduled for Wednesday, December 17, 2014 for the Planned Development at 1571 Maple Avenue. He has received the required materials from the applicants that the Commission requested and received materials from the opposition. Materials will be posted as soon as possible.

D. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, Commissioner Dubin made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Goddard seconded the motion.

A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved by voice call 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Damir Latinovic
Neighborhood and Land Use Planner
Community Development Department